

Introduction

The Disaster and Preservation Services Task Force of Rhode Island's Preservation Planning Project has prepared this manual to assist you in planning for and recovering from disasters that afflict libraries, archives, museums, historical societies, government agencies, and other such institutions. The value of the materials housed in these institutions is greater than most people realize. It is best to safeguard the contents, so that you do not have to repair or replace large portions of your collections. If you are ready to respond quickly in the case of an emergency, you will be able to limit the amount of damage that is done by most disasters. The amount of time spent completing the plan is negligible compared to the amount of time it would take to recover from a major disaster. A trained staff can respond efficiently and this will limit the amount of recovery work required.

The information contained in this manual must be familiar to **ALL** staff. When you have inserted all information that is institution-specific, it might be helpful to have a staff meeting to discuss the manual and how it should be used. One way to make sure that your staff is familiar with the information in this manual is to incorporate disaster planning into new staff orientation. Tell new staff what plans have been made, how to alert staff in the event of an emergency, and show them where recovery supplies are stored. All staff should know how to initiate the recovery plans. By making the manual part of the orientation program, new staff will be aware of the importance that is placed on disaster planning. When the pipe bursts is not the time to start reading the plan.

This manual is not a static document. You must fill in the blanks so that the information contained in it reflects your institution. Also, once the document has been filled in, that does not mean that it can be put on a shelf and forgotten. The information that you provide must be updated periodically. As staff changes, the names must be changed on all appropriate forms. Some of the forms are inspection logs for which entries need to be made on a regular basis. Disaster planning is an ongoing responsibility. The responsibility for updating the disaster plan must be assigned to specific staff members. It is best to involve several people in maintaining the disaster plan.

We have provided the blank forms for you to photocopy and fill in. You can make multiple copies of the forms, depending on the size of your staff. We recommend that you keep a blank for use as a master. In order to update information, you will need a blank to photocopy for future use. The manual is designed so that you do not have to update it entirely. The manual can be updated section by section.

There should be multiple copies of the plan. Administrators and those who will play a key role in the recovery process should have copies of the plan both in their offices and at home. Each institution has its own administrative organization, so some job titles, etc. will not match exactly. We have used job titles and department names that are commonly used. Words that appear in ***bold italics*** are defined in the glossary.

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The salvage procedures, outlined in section III of the manual, are for items damaged by fire and water. The recovery procedures are given by the scale of the disaster.

(See p. 10D.3 for help in estimating the size of disaster.)

A small disaster is one where all damaged items are salvaged immediately. These incidents should be handled in-house, using air drying methods. Only those items that require specialized treatment should not be air dried. It will normally affect fewer than 75 volumes. A medium-sized disaster will involve between 75 and 500 volumes. Some damaged items can be frozen, and the recovery process may be done in stages. A large disaster entails damage to over 500 volumes. A disaster of this magnitude will be beyond the in-house resources of your institution. The use of services provided by outside organizations will be required.

In a large scale disaster you will need a team of people who are responsible for the co-ordination of the recovery process. Their roles are explained in the disaster recovery procedures.

We wish to thank the Preservation Committee of New York University for allowing us to base the Rhode Island Manual on their ***Disaster Plan Workbook***. Funding for this manual was provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Library Services and Construction Act.

If you have any questions or need some guidance in filling out this manual please get in touch with a member of the task force.

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